

Senator Linares,

Thank you for returning my phone call. **I oppose SB700**

I have attached our main argument in favor of rejecting SB700.

Our main point is that the current Purple Heart license plate is a "Special Interest Plate" issued only to members of our organization in the same fashion as other organizations have a special interest plate available only to their members.

Currently, Connecticut doesn't issue any plate recognizing military awards such as the Silver Star of Navy Cross and the Department of Motor Vehicles would need to create a program to verify every award.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart is a national, Congressionally chartered, Veterans Service Organization formed in Connecticut. We followed all of the rules to create the current Military Order of the Purple Heart Special Interest Plate and it would be an unjustifiable insult to take it away from us.

I live in Westbrook with my family. In 1966 I joined the United States Marine Corps and served as a machine gunner in Vietnam where I was wounded in 1967. I founded and led a medical equipment company for 20 years until 2007 when I was forced to retire because of health issues related to my service.

I very much appreciate your interest and I hope you will be able to speak in opposition to SB700 before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs at their meeting Tuesday, February 19, 2013.

Thank you for your help,

Yours in Patriotism,

Francis E. Burke  
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## Talking Points

### License Plates-Proposed Bill No. 700

- Proposed Bill No 700 seeks to amend the current process by utilizing the DMV in lieu of MOPH to verify that the veteran was awarded the Purple Heart. This by review of their DD-214. It also eliminates the requirement for the veteran to join and pay dues to MOPH, a national organization whose membership is limited to Purple Heart recipients.
- Connecticut did not offer the Purple Heart License Plates until after an MOPH initiative in 1990. The PH License Plate is a Special Interest Plate and the reason it exist is because our organization took the initiative, obtained the necessary signatures, paid the startup cost and developed the necessary procedures to insure the applicants were in fact Purple Heart Recipients.
- The State of Connecticut does not require that our plate specify that it is a fraternal military organization or any kind of organization, only that the logo used on the plate is authorized for use and will not cause legal issues. We satisfy all this criteria.
- We established the Purple Heart Plate and require membership because we maintain an unwavering desire to protect the integrity of the plate and what it means. Issuing the plate to individuals whose sole interest is individual recognition does not protect the integrity of the plate. We also encourage membership in our organization. This is true of other organizations that have also made this effort.
- The Purple Heart image on the plate is trademarked by the US Army Department of Heraldry. MOPH was given unfettered (Free from restraint of any kind) use of the PH image on License Plates, Purple Heart Trail signs and other uses. This authority was given to MOPH by the Army Trades Mark Licensing Program.
- Verification of the receipt of the Purple Heart is extremely important to us. Our members who own these plates have been vetted properly and are enormously proud of the plates, and what they represent. They are also proud to be a member of the Connecticut Military Order of the Purple Heart.
- Recently the Governor of Virginia at the prompting of MOPH directed that an investigation be conducted of the DMV PH Licensing Program. MOPH and DMV conducted the investigation and found that 20% or 1 in 5 of the PH issued plates was found to be fraudulent.
- The cost of a **Life Time** membership in MOPH is \$50.00. There are no dues! Our Department has proudly provided the cost of numerous Life Time memberships to our young Purple Heart Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Verification of the DD-214 only would exclude many Purple Heart recipients from qualifying for the plates. Verification requires knowledge of the military process. The discharge for example should be honorable and there are other means of verifying receipt of the award.
- The bill, if approved will result in an increase in cost to the veterans. Currently the Purple Heart Plate cost \$10. The veterans status is verified, issue of the plates authorized, and registration forms submitted to DMV through MOPH. The plates are then mailed by DMV to the veteran. A simple and effective administrative process that is performed at no cost to the veteran. If the process is amended as proposed the cost of the plate will increase and applicants will be required to travel to a DMV office.
- The process used by MOPH is similar to other Military and Veteran Special Interest Plates and organizations. Verification of eligibility is conducted by the respective organization, membership is required and there is a cost to join. This process is followed by other organizations such as The Silent Service, Disabled American Veterans, Marine Corps League, Korean War Veterans, Greater Hartford Chapter of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and I am sure many other organizations. If this bill were approved it would be considered as discriminatory against the Military Order of the Purple Heart.